

## Minutes

### SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

4 November 2015

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p><b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b> Councillors: Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Teji Barnes (Vice-Chairman) Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana Peter Davis Beulah East (Labour Lead) Becky Haggar Manjit Khatra June Nelson Jane Palmer  Mary O'Connor</p>
	<p><b>OFFICERS PRESENT:</b> Nigel Dicker (Deputy Director of Residents' Services), Ed Shaylor (Community Safety Team - Service Manager), Debby Weller (Policy and Strategy Manager - Housing) , David Youngs (Category Manager - Housing, Landlord Engagement Team) and Charles Francis (Democratic Services)</p> <p><b>ALSO PRESENT:</b> David Miller, Charrison Davies</p>
	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>All items were considered in Public.</p>
	<p><b>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2015</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Were deferred for consideration until 20 January 2016 meeting.</p>
	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED IN PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>All items were considered in Public.</p>

**MAJOR REVIEWS IN 2015/16 - RAISING STANDARDS IN PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR ACCOMMODATION - WITNESS SESSION 3** (*Agenda Item 5*)

The Category Manager - Housing, (Landlord Engagement Team) introduced the report and provided an overview of the types of information currently available to tenants.

The Committee noted that at present, initial enquiries regarding landlord issues were dealt with via the Council's contact centre who had scripts for dealing with a variety of query types. Subject to the responses received, tenants were directed to the relevant Housing Team or resource.

Officers explained that the Homelessness Prevention Team would also provide basic advice on landlord and tenant relationships. Where there might be a need for more specific intervention in relation to housing standards, households were directed to the Private Sector Housing Team. Alternatively, enquiries could be made through Ward Councillors via the Members Enquiry route.

Discussing the internet based resources available, the Committee were informed that a section of the Council website was devoted to private sector housing conditions and provided detailed advice for both tenants and landlords. Although this could be navigated relatively easily, some prior knowledge of housing terms was needed to use the search functionality most effectively. Web based information was also reliant on the tenant being proactive.

As well as electronically available information, the Committee were shown a number of generic paper based leaflets which provided information, advice and guidance on rights and responsibilities and a variety of safety and maintenance information.

In addition to the information available to tenants, Officers explained a well established Landlords Forum had been in existence for a number of years. This was especially useful for disseminating information about new legislation, Benefits changes as well as providing practical advice on safety protocols and hazards. As such, this had been attended by the Emergency services in the past.

David Miller, Charrison Davies

David Miller from Charrison Davies, Estate Agents based in Hayes and Harlington provided an overview of the private rented sector from a market perspective.

He explained how in the past a number of landlords had favoured public sector tenants as they were perceived as offering a more secure long term tenancy. However, more recently, market forces meant the sector had become more volatile, competition for properties had increased and as a result rents has become more expensive.

In response to a query about what more the Council could do to influence the sector, reference was made to the possibility of incentive payments and

grants to see if public sector tenancies could be made more competitive within the market place.

Members were also aware that due to the changes in Benefits legislation, the number of tenants in arrears was rising and as a result so were the number of evictions. Officers explained they were aware of the phenomenon which they were monitoring closely.

**Resolved –**

- 1. To note the report**
- 2. That Officers be requested to provide paper copies of the leaflets included in the agenda pack.**

**FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 6*)

**Resolved -**

**That the report be noted.**

**WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 7*)

The Committee discussed the Work Programme.

**Resolved -**

**That the Work Programme be noted.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.55 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Charles Francis on 01895 556454. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.